Answering of Questions.

Mr. T. K. Nayar.—Sir, in this connection, I would like to know, when the President allows a question, whether the Government has got any power to decline to answer.

President.—Yes. Government cannot be compelled to answer.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—From previous answers, it is clear that, for giving information such as giving dates, etc., questions have to be postponed and a fresh notice has to be given. There is a contingent of the Huzur clerks and the clerks of other Departments here, and it is a pity that the Government at least does not look into the files and take care that such answers as dates are supplied. I want to bring this to the notice of the President. For the reference to the dates they want notice.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—We cannot carry the dates in our memory.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—I make a reference to the President. My complaint is not against the Members on the other side. It is to bring it to the notice of the President.

President.—May I ask you for my information why the Heads of Departments cannot be ready with the files so that full answers may be given? What is the difficulty in the matter? I shall consider that. To a certain extent when a question is put, we are expected to know everything in connection with that.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—We know the questions only when we come and sit down here. We are not supplied with the questions before. We cannot bring the files, and my office is in Trichur. I do not know what questions are coming up.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—The Heads of Departments are supplying the answers.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—We have answered numerous questions and we do not know which questions are coming up on a particular day.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Then all the files will have to be brought.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—If I am to bring all the files in connection with the numerous questions I have answered, then a good part of my office will have to be brought here.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—I would like to know why the Member who puts the question cannot ask these as parts of a primary question. No Member is likely to carry in his memory the dates and all the relevant facts. We may be ready to answer the supplementary questions, if notice is given. But no one expects that it would be a supplementary

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question. I would really like to say that, in my humble opinion, the matter about dates can be put as a primary question for which the Member can easily get an answer, and thus save us from the predicament of asking for notice here.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—That comes after the answers. We put supplementary questions upon the answers given by the Government. We cannot send them as original questions. The supplementary questions arise after getting these replies from the Government.

President.—Why could not the dates be given when you ask your questions?

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Such insignificant factors as dates we are asked to put in the original question. If the files are here, it would be easy for the Government to supply us with the information.

Mr. T. M. Krishna Menon.—It is difficult to lay down a general rule. It is not possible because we shall have to bring all the files, if you are very particular about dates. We do not want to keep back anything. If the papers are here, and if there is an opportunity to be ready with the papers, we will be ready. We cannot say in all cases. It is not possible to give the answers without the files. We will try to accommodate ourselves.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—The office of the Secretary to the Diwan is at Ernakulam. He would have been able to give all the details for the files are here. Of course, as far as the Education Department is concerned, he will have to go to Trichur. The office of the Secretary to the Diwan is within a few yards of this Hall.

Mr. T. M. Krishna Menon.—You must include me also because my office also is at Trichur.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—The Secretary answers the questions referring to the Anchal, Registration, Chief Court, District Court, Munsiff Court, Co-operative, etc. Well, in these cases, the files are with those Departments themselves. When we send the questions, they send us the answers, and we do not get the files here. On the basis of the answers supplied, we draft the answers to be supplied here. If we are to bring all those files, so many actions will have to be taken upon them there, and how long are we going to keep those files here ?

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Till the end of the session or till it is required. It is not one month or two months.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.— For about two weeks.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—That is only for the budget meeting. As to the others it is only for 5 days.

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Rama Varmha Tampuran.—Are we to get those files from those Departments ?

Dr. A. G. Menon.—If the Government finds it difficult, it will be much more difficult on our side to get an answer.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—The questions can be easily answered if, in the questions they ask originally, they mention the dates also. Where the Members can ask, I think they ought to ask and not put us in the predicament of asking for notice and then to pass judgment on the Members.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—It is one of the easiest things to be given. Do not take this as my only grievance, about dates alone. This I take as an example, that is all. You have only to just look into the file and for that we are asked to give you a fresh notice, and the number of questions is swelling. That will be the next complaint that there are so many questions, that they cannot be answered. If we put these supplementary questions as original questions, the number of questions will be swelling to a very large extent. They say that we are to put such insignificant factors as dates in the form of original questions. That is rather very uncivilized.

President.—Do you mean to say that Government Members are not taking earnest endeavours to give full information to the House ? You don't suggest that ?

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Certainly not, though they are indifferent to bring the files here.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—There is one aspect which the Hon'ble Member for Medicine has been telling, that we must give the dates. Let us see the position who is in a better position regarding dates. When you receive a paper about a particular thing, it is better known to you than the public at large.

Diwan Bahadur Dr V. Verghese.—I never said that.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—To judge from our own standard, we get petitions from our own constituency, sometimes anonymous by post, that such and such a thing is taking place. We put some questions and ascertain facts and then make use of them. And when you say that you have not got the information on a particular point ready, is it not a confession of weakness ?

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Not at all.

Mr. A. B. Salemr—Otherwise, when a question is put, it is incumbent upon the officer to note that question in a book and all the relevant facts regarding it, the dates and everything else, and have a question book with you. There is no difficulty at all. There is plenty of stationery for the Government. That is what we do. We put down in our books all the questions and collect as much information as we can upon the questions. If

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do you cannot this, you are not carrying on your duty properly. You need not bring all your office files, carry all your office with you, fromTrichur to Ernakulam. If you have got a question book, all the information that you have got regarding that question can be noted in it.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—How are we to know what is the point on which information is required ?

Mr. A. B. Salem.—You must be prepared with all the information.

RaoSahib Mr. C. Matthai.—I was asked, with regard to the question of the shifting of the College to Anappara, to produce the Government Order sanctioning the shifting of the College. Can we imagine that we would be questioned on that point when the whole thing is in the budget ?

Mr. K. P. Kannan Nayar.—And the Diwan's Proceedings can be got from the Huzur in five minutes' time !

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—The mere fact that it is in the budget is sufficient evidence for any Member of this House to take it for granted that the Government have passed an order about the transfer.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—I think the Member is out of order. We are not discussing those allotments. We are discussing about questions and answers.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—The point is we do not know what questions are asked. It may come in any direction.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—The question from the Member for Jenmies was whether you called for explanation after the receipt of his question, and the Member in charge says he does not know. That is a very simple question. Sir, the Member for the Landlords' constituency put this question whether you called for this explanation after the receipt of his question by the Government. No answer is given. It could have been very easily answered. So unnecessarily the supplementary questions are increased and from one supplementary question we put another.

President.—According to my conception and attitude, what the Departments should adopt in these matters is this: There is no doubt the practice in the Huzur, sanctioned by me, that, along with these questions, the draft replies should be submitted by the Heads of Departments concerned. Originally, it was a sort of giving some communications on a few facts. The correct procedure is this: the answers themselves must be framed by the Heads of Departments ; we get all these draft answers and we scrutinise them and then we draft these as they are or making such changes as are necessary. That is thepractice. I should, for my part, consider that, when these

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draft replies are prepared, the Heads of Departments must be thoroughly conversant with the subject, (*hear, hear*) I mean all relevant particulars, so that it will not be necessary to ask for a fresh notice for a question if a careful study of the whole subject is made. I believe that the practice, at any rate of my Secretary, is to examine these answers early in the morning, to conceive of all possible supplementary questions and be ready with the answers. That rule he has been following as a matter of fact, and I believe it is the proper thing to do in order that all the questions may be properly answered. (*Hear, hear.*) If there is any difficulty in following the method suggested by me, I may consider what the proper procedure is. What I want to point out is that, when a question is asked,—of course questions are asked with a purpose—you must always note that, either for information or for the purpose of making something distinct about these, it is not a plain sailing. There is nothing to be suspected in these matters. Of course, in cases where there have been errors committed or things that have not been done properly, and where there has been an irregularity in the procedure, we will see that such a thing does not occur hereafter. That is the proper attitude to be adopted in the matter of answering questions. I have always been insisting that all possible information should be given when a question is put, and of course you must remember that I was saying that we should not stand on technicalities, that it is not a supplementary question, etc.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—We are ready to give all relevant facts. I shall take an example. Here is a question whether one sister Elizabeth doing duty in the Civil Hospital at Trichur was on leave during the month of Dhanu 1104. I say 'Yes'. And then when the Member gets up and asks 'from what date did she avail herself of the leave', is that supplementary question relevant and proper? It may be called that it is relevant; but I say the Member can easily have put that question with the original question. It is only in that matter, as regards dates, where the Member can ask the question in the original question and need not put us in the plight of asking for notice. We come here ready with all the facts, but then suddenly they ask what is the date.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—With reference to the leave of sister Elizabeth, the Medical Officer says his reply was 'Yes'.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—I am asked to produce the attendance register.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—The answer to that question is 'the matter is under the consideration of the Government.' It is printed in to-day's 'Questions and Answers'.

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Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—I am only giving you an example.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—I too rely upon that example.

The question is "Whether one sister Elizabeth, doing duty in the Civil Hospital at Trichur,was on leave for some time during the month of Dhanu 1104?' The reply is 'the matter is under the consideration of the Government.' That is the reply we get here.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—I just took up the answer (*loud laughter*) here as a hypothetical example; because here is a model question, from which date did she avail herself of the leave. Had the Member not asked that question in the original question, from which date she availed herself of the leave, and suddenly asked that question to me as a supplementary question, I would have asked for notice. Fortunately that Member has asked that question in the original question itself. I was quoting only an example.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—To mislead us.

Mr. T. M. Krishna Menon.—I think he said 'Mithunam'.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—He can twist as he likes.

Diwan Bahadur Dr. V. Verghese.—Fortunately the Member has asked a full question. Supposing the Member had not asked a full question as regards date, we only ask for notice. I was only quoting an example. Wherever possible, I say, the Hon'ble Members who put the question should ask a full question, especially with reference to facts which they can easily foresee.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—In view of the answer quoted by the Chief Medical Officer I have nothing more to say than that I am sorry for the reply given by the Government.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—Do you want a more potent example of the hollowness of the pretences you make on the other side? A simple question is asked whether she was doing duty in the Civil Hospital or whether she was on leave, if so, when did she avail herself of the leave. The answer should have been either that she was on leave or that she was not, and to pretend that we want to give you all the information and say that the matter is under the consideration of the Government, I can simply say, is only emphasising and proving to the world that you have nothing but a mass of pretences and you are not what you are. (*Hear, hear.*)

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—Sir, I would ask the Members on the other side not to think that we are trying to hide any fact from them. Then I think there will be no trouble. If you are not satisfied with the explanation about the practical difficulties of the Government to come here with all the files

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relating to all the questions, we regret it. If any Member will go and ask any official Member about any relevant matter of public importance, he will place all the facts before him and solve the difficulties of that Member. As a rule, we try to bring the necessary files relating to the questions answered here. But to take a summary of all the files, I do not think, is practicable. Anyway we appeal to you not to think that we are here hiding from you any facts.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—I will make the same appeal to the Member on the Government side. My argument, as was stated earlier in the discussion, is the same. We are placed in a much more unfavourable condition. They are placed in a better condition. They have the files with them and we have not got them. They should, therefore, see that the questions are answered in such a way as not to bring in further discussion. This can be done by giving a straightforward answer, and, if possible, they should give all available information with regard to a question. We do not want to cross-examine the Government. And from the nature of the questions and answers, you can understand that there were no supplementary questions for so many questions. Only on one or two questions supplementary questions were asked. The other answers were satisfactory. On the other hand, to the few questions on which supplementary questions were asked, the answers were not satisfactory, and so we bring our grievance to you, Sir.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan.—On a point of information. As far as the Government is concerned, who is the final authority in deciding whether a question can be answered or not? Is it the Member in charge of the Department or the Government?

Mr. K. P. Kannan Nayar.—It is the Government.

President.—I may say it is the Government. Mr. Kannan Nayar says that it is the Government and I agree with him.

Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan.—Are not the Heads of Departments also included in the term 'Government?'

President.—I will refer you to the discussion on that subject. It is not capable of further elucidation.

Mr. K. J. Antony.—With regard to a part of my question, the answer given is 'the Government decline to answer.' If that is the case, Government could have disallowed the question and need not have given such an answer.

President.—It is the President who allows the question.

Mr. K. J. Antony.—The President should have disallowed.

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President.—The President thought that the question might go. But the Government found that it could not be answered.

Mr. K. J. Antony.—There were several questions put to-day, and I was not able to get satisfactory answers to my supplementary questions.

President.—I think that was about some personal matter about Mr. Ravunni Menon.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—That was the very reason to place these facts before you, i. e., that we are not getting satisfactory answers to the supplementary questions.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—We have been hearing appeals one after another from the other side during this session. We are also making the same appeal and say that, with what little can be done by the other side to supply us with the information that we ask for, certainly we would be satisfied. Now, one or two difficulties have been pointed out about supplying information in supplementary questions. A lot of supplementary questions would have been very easily avoided if the original and primary answer had been in itself full. Take for instance question No. 202 from the Hon'ble Member for Landholders in to-day's questions and answers. The answer to (d) is "the subordinates who allowed the transport without passes have been called upon to explain". If you had inserted the date also of calling for the explanation, because the very explanation shows that action might have been taken after the question reached the Government, there would have been no supplementary question. It is to bring out that fact that that date is called for, and when you say, of course, without notice we cannot give the date, nobody can carry all the dates in our heads, etc., we ask supplementary questions. If the original answer itself had been a complete one,— from the way the answer is given it will be seen that action might have been taken only after the receipt of the question—a lot of supplementary questions would have been avoided. Therefore, of course, we also make the same appeal as was made by them, namely, as far as possible questions may be answered in full and thereby supplementary questions may not be asked. If the date too had been given, there will be no necessity for this searching enquiry to show when action was taken, whether it is after the receipt of the question or before the receipt of the question.

President.—Is it your point that supplementary questions should be few and far between and that there should be no occasion for supplementary questions?

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Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—If the answers are full, it will not be necessary to put supplementary questions.

President.—There should be supplementary questions and there must be answers. Otherwise it will be a dull hour.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Then the records must be here.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—They must not take shelter under this.

President.—If there are no supplementary questions, then it will be a dull hour.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—We never take this one hour as an hour for fun.

President.—I never said that it was an hour of fun. I said that it would be a dull hour.

Mr. P. Krishna Menon.—But it will be a very instructive hour to us.

മിസ്റ്റർ ഒൗസേപ്പ് പി. കുണ്ടുകുളം.—ഈ മാന്യ മെമ്പർ പറഞ്ഞ അഭിപ്രായത്തിനെ ഞാനും പിൻതാങ്ങുന്നു. ഇതിനുള്ള കാരണം ഈ കഴിഞ്ഞ സെഷനിൽ പറപ്പൂർ സെൻജോൺസ് പ്രൈമറി സ്കൂളിലേക്ക് ഒരു തുന്നൽ മിസ്ട്രസ്സിനെ കൊടുക്കാത്തതു എന്തുകൊണ്ടാണെന്ന് ചോദിക്കയുണ്ടായി. അതിനു ഗവമ്മെണ്ടിൽ നിന്നുണ്ടായ മറുപടി ഈ സ്കൂളിൽ ലോവർ സെക്കണ്ടറി ഡിപ്പാർട്ടുമെണ്ടിൽ ഒരു തുന്നൽ മിസ്ട്രസ്സ് ഉണ്ടെന്നും ആ മിസ്ട്രസ്സിനെ പ്രൈമറി ഡിപ്പാർട്ടുമെണ്ടിലെ ജോലിയുംകൂടി നോക്കാമെന്നുമാണ്.

ഇതിനു ഉപചോദ്യങ്ങളായി ചോദിച്ചിട്ടുള്ള സകല ചോദ്യങ്ങൾക്കും നോട്ടീസ് എന്നുമാത്രമാണ് മറുപടി ഉണ്ടായതു്. എന്നാൽ ഈ സ്കൂളിലെ തുന്നൽ മിസ്ട്രസ്സിനെ പിരിച്ചിട്ടു മൂന്നുകൊല്ലത്തോളം ആയി. ഫ ഫ ഠ ഫ -ൽ ഗവമ്മെണ്ടു് അനുവാദത്തോടുകൂടിയാണ് ഈ മിസ്ട്രസ്സിനെ പിരിച്ചതും. ഫ ഫ ഠ ർ -ൽ ഈ സ്കൂളിൽ ഒരു മിസ്ട്രസ്സ് ഉണ്ടെന്നുള്ളതു ഗവമ്മെണ്ടിന്റെ ഏതുഫയലിൽനിന്നാണ് കിട്ടിയതു് എന്നു അറിയുന്നില്ല. അന്നു ഗവമ്മെണ്ടതന്ന മറുപടി ശുദ്ധകളവാണ്.

ദിവാൻ ബഹദൂർ ഡോക്ടർ വി. വട്ടീസ്.—അതു മറന്നു പോയിരിക്കാം.

ഡാക്ടർ എ. ജി. മേനോൻ.—മറന്നുപോയതു വയസ്സുകൊണ്ടോ മറ്റോ ആയിരിക്കാം.

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മിസ്റ്റർ ഔസേപ്പ പി. കണ്ടുകുളം.—പിന്നേയും ഉണ്ടായ ഉപ ചോദ്യങ്ങൾക്ക മറുപടി ഉണ്ടായതു" പബ്ലിക് സെൻഷ്യോൺസ്സു" സ്സു ളിലെ ലോവർ സെക്കണ്ടറി ഡിപ്പാർട്ടുമെണ്ടു് ഗ്രാണ്ടു"-ഇൻ-എയ്ഡ്" അല്ലാത്തതുകൊണ്ടു ഗവമ്മെണ്ടിനു അറിവില്ലെന്നാണു" ഈ കൌൺസ്സലിൽ പിടിക്കപ്പെട്ടവയായും അനേക ചോദ്യങ്ങൾ ഞങ്ങൾക്കു് പ്രതിബന്ധങ്ങളായിട്ടുള്ളവയുണ്ടു്. ഈ വക തടസ്ഥങ്ങൾ എല്ലാം നീക്കി അനുവദിക്കപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുള്ള മുഴുക്കം ചില ചോദ്യങ്ങൾക്കെങ്കിലും തക്കതായ മറുപടി തരുത്തക്കവണ്ണം റിക്കാർഡുകളോടുകൂടി ഗവമ്മെണ്ടു മെമ്പർമാർ വരേണ്ടതാണെന്നു മാത്രമെ ഞാൻ പറയുന്നുള്ളു.

Rao Sahib Mr. .C. Matthai.—The point that the Member urges is this. There were so many files in connection with this question. One particular file was not looked into. It was when that question was raised here that it was found that that particular file was omitted and so for giving the full information that file had to be looked into.

President.—I think you have understood each other. The thing is full information as far as possible should be given, so that there may not be any room for complaint that the answers have been suppressed because there is something that has been given out or that nothing comes out from the answer. That is the view that I am taking. We shall try to give full information hereafter.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—Thank you, Sir. That is all what we want.

Public Works Budget.

Dr. A. G. Menon.—In this connection I want to bring to the notice of the President that the Public Works Department is the Department where large sums are spent. All allotments for buildings in all other Departments also are put under the Pubilc Works Department and, therefore, we do not get sufficient time to enter into discussion regarding the Public Works proper. So the buildings for each Department might be put under the respective Departments and discussed there, buildings for the Education Department under Education, buildings for Medical under the Medical Department, and so on. Now we have not sufficient time to get even information of the several works undertaken by the Public Works Member, for other Departments. We have no time to go into the Irrigation and other important works of the Public Works proper for the next year.

Rao Sahib Mr. C. Matthai.—Is the change suggested to be made in this year's budget ?

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